THE
MONASTERY
BY THE
RIVER

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The monastery by the river

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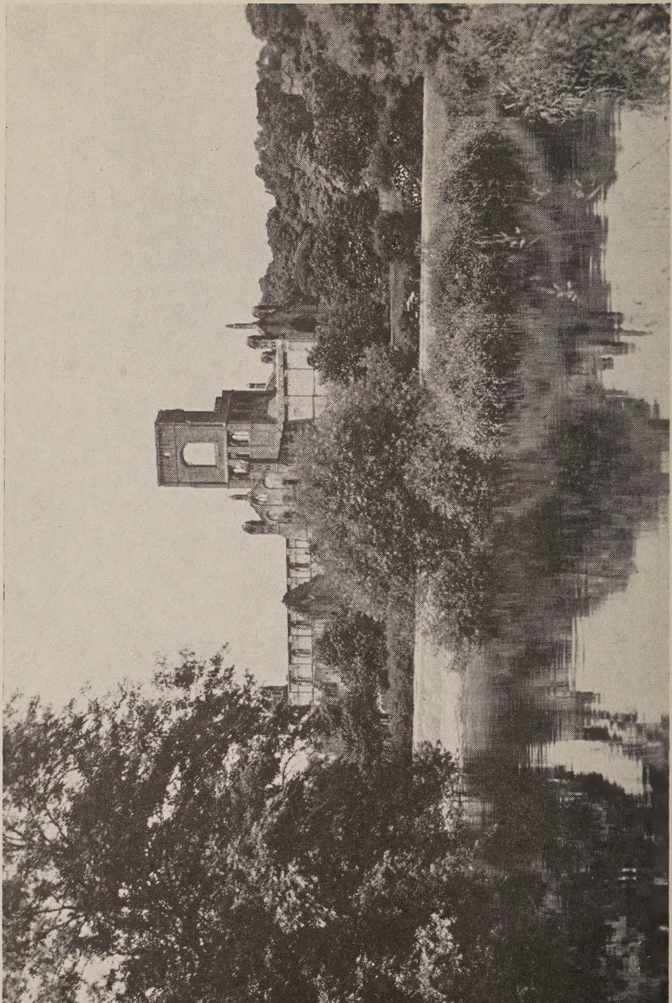

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THE MONASTERY *By* THE RIVER

BY

G. STANLEY RUSSELL, M.A.

MINISTER, DEER PARK UNITED CHURCH,
TORONTO

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TO THE
CHOIRBOYS OF CLAPHAM CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
LONDON, ENGLAND, 1915-1929
AND THE BOYS OF
UPPER CANADA COLLEGE WORSHIPPING IN
DEER PARK UNITED CHURCH
TORONTO, CANADA.

FOREWORD

The origin of these stories is sufficiently indicated in the following pages, but they would probably never have been invented had I not been anxious to speak on Sunday mornings to the Choir boys of my London church. No adult Choir ever surpassed the reverence or enthusiasm of those lads, some of whom now, grown men, are among my most intimate friends, and their love of the Monastery made an added tie between us. Their interest in John was, perhaps, not unnatural, but soon all the Brothers claimed their attention and I once heard a small soprano voice refusing a proffered but unpalatable article of diet with an "I like it not," which told me that Brother Gregory had not lived in vain.

In Canada, where ancient Abbeys are far away, it seemed unlikely that the Brothers would make their appearance or their appeal, especially as the Junior Congregation at Deer Park takes the children to a service of their own. The Upper Canada boys, however, made me anxious not to omit from the service something they might find helpful, and I ventured to commence "The Monastery by the River."

Not even in England did it find the welcome at once given it by all sorts of people. Teachers, parents, theological students, and even ministers were so pressing in their desire for "the name of the book" that I had at last to insert in the Church Calendar my confession of authorship and assurance of future publication. Amongst these appreciative listeners have been the boys of the great Public School, as we should call it in England, who attend our Morning Service. I therefore link them with their English predecessors in my thought of "The Monastery."

I have lived with the Brothers for many happy years, for there were long intervals between the sextets in which the stories were originally told—for one story I acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr. Archibald Alexander—and I grew to love them all and they did me worlds of good. Amid the roar of modern cities and the efficiency of modern methods, the sweet piety of the Abbey—in the days when Mother Church did nearly everything for her children, and did it kindly and well—brought me much peace, as I entered it week by week to see what was happening and being said within its walls. My Roman Catholic fellow-Christians will, I trust, pardon the errors which here and there must have betrayed my unfamiliarity with the Benedictine Order, but they will also, I am sure, accept the spirit of the volume as a tribute to what, if I cannot share it, I can at least love and admire.

I part from my Brothers with real sorrow, and yet it is not a parting if others will open to them the door of understanding hearts.

G. STANLEY RUSSELL

Toronto, 1930

THE MONASTERY
by
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THE MONASTERY BY THE RIVER

WHERE THE ABBEY WAS

AS you travel out of England into Scotland on what used to be the Midland Railway, your train takes a turn to the right, after it has stopped at Leeds, and makes for Skipton, Hellifield, and Carlisle on its way to the north. Often, then, as I joined the train from Bradford, did I travel home past a beautiful ruin that lies not far from Leeds. It was an ancient Abbey, built somewhere about the 12th Century—so the history books declare—and flourishing at perhaps its best and richest when Richard III rode out to Bosworth Field and Cardinal Wolsey led home the delighted Henry VIII from the Field of the Cloth of Gold.

High into the sky the one remaining side of its tower thrust a precarious beauty, and bits of masonry—of buttressed walls and leaping arches—needed but imagination to make them again into a perfect shrine. In what had been the choir doubtless "the wild birds sing," and in what was once the nave most certainly the sheep were sometimes grazing. On one side of the ruins were traces of a garden, and the wall stood high above the stream, on which the monks would be able to look as they walked among their trees and flowers, and into which, in their days, the refuse of the mills did not enter to be borne to an unwilling sea. It may have been a habited friar travelling in the same carriage, followed by a long wait in the small hours of the morning at a dismal place where the accommodation for such a thing seemed to have made no progress since railways were first invented, that inspired a dream wherein, under the rule of Benedict, the ruined Abbey by the Yorkshire river resumed its life once more. There was a reverend Abbot, with silver hair and a face sweetened by many sorrows, whose very presence added to the sanctity even of such a place. There was a group of Brothers, each with his own peculiar bent and disposition, and very human therein, but none the less sincere in his profession, and all were united to service and each other by this Monastery, of whose central tower one side still leapt towards heaven. "It may well be," Abbot Stephen would say, as he moved amongst them, a father and a saint to every one, "it may well be that we may live even when our Abbey stands no more, for lives of goodness often make their way through the world, when stones have crumbled into decay. Therefore let us deal very gently with each other, working and reading together, keeping ourselves to prayer and the offices of God's House, being of good service to the cottager in the village, the traveller who passes by, and the beggar who knocks at our gate. So let us live that, even as our vesper bell sends its benediction through the valley, so our presence here may leave a peaceful fragrance when its note is heard no more, and the passer-by may be moved to pray because he feels that fragrance in the air." And the Brothers murmured very earnestly "Amen, Father Abbot, even so let us live." I was the passer-by, as the train rushed towards Scotland, and many times I felt that, in the desert of things modern and material, the little patch of ground made a tiny oasis of peace and holiness that gave the whole journey thereafter something of sweetness to the thought. For me, at any rate, the Brothers had not lived in vain.

THE ABBEY GATE

YOU climbed a little hill from the village and then crossed a bridge over the river, and found yourself at the Monastery Gate. There were really two—and great doors they were, in one of which a smaller portal had been cut, and this was really the one that was used. At this the world's need gathered—the beggar who seldom knocked in vain, the traveller seeking shelter from the storm, the fugitive craving sanctuary from an unjust law, and the Abbey took them all to its heart. Here, too, came those with news; as when from Bosworth Field eager men brought tidings that Richard Crookback was dead and there was a Tudor king in England. Occasionally a gay cavalcade would arrive as some northern noble made his way from Court to his castle in the dales or perhaps farther north in Durham. Then the great gates would be opened and the Brothers set forth the best entertainment they could, for they knew their poor would benefit from the gift the rich man left behind him. Sometimes, too, a pilgrim who had made the journey to Jerusalem would halt there for a night and tell of far lands, strange peoples, and the Holy City itself. Through that same gate love was carried out to the world, for the brothers were well known and loved in the village near by, where they nursed the sick, reconciled the offended, taught the ignorant, and comforted the sorrowful. To be porter was the duty of almost every monk in turn, only those with special work being excused, and one day the gatekeeper was Brother Ignatius who had been a great man once out in the world before many sorrows had come to him and left him lonely and sent him to find peace within the Abbey walls. A traveller arrived who had known him in those earlier days and expressed surprise at finding him at what he called so menial a task as tending the gate. "No tasks are menial," said Brother Ignatius, in reply to his visitor, "that least of all which opens the way for need to come in and pity to go out in a world where there is much of the one and too little of the other. Besides which there was One who said 'I am the Door' and thus all good doorkeepers are His servants," and Abbot Stephen said it was a good answer. "For," observed the good old man, "it is not what we do but how we do it and why we do it that make any task honorable or otherwise,"—and the traveller said no more, but became very thoughtful, for he had never seen it in that clear light before.

HILARIUS

IN olden times getting ready for Christmas was a great business though they didn't start so early as folks seem to do now, since by the end of November they tell us that "that's too near Christmas." Still they were very busy in the Monastery and the centre of it all was Brother Hilarius—whose name was by no means ill-chosen. Charles II said of one of his Ministers that he was "never in the way and never out of it," and that was a true description of Brother Hilarius. He never pushed himself forward, but on the other hand he was always coming to the rescue. Frayed tempers and impatient humours vanished like magic when he arrived with his quiet happy ways. None ever knew him nurse a grievance or show he had one. He was everybody's friend; the first to think of a kindness that might be done to somebody; the first to run to do a task that everybody hated; the first to decide that the 'undeserving poor' as he called them, had more need than any, "for" he would say, "they have not even the consciousness of virtue to keep them warm." Therefore, when "getting ready for

Christmas" was in hand, Brother Hilarius was invaluable and all the others knew it. Indeed, otherwise it might have been possible to prepare a celebration of Peace and Goodwill with a few caustic words from Brother Ambrose, and a few doleful remarks from Brother Jeremy as they hung up their own mistletoe and holly. But Brother Hilarius kept them all cheerful, sweet-spirited and interested until the last little child had gone home and their own Christmas night had seen them tired out. "I don't know how you do it," said Brother Andrew as they turned bedwards, "I couldn't be as cheerful as you are and as gentle to us all." "Oh, yes, you could," said Brother Hilarius, as he smiled, "for only two things are necessary for a happy Christmas—one is to keep it in the heart and the other is to keep it all the year round. Only those who do these things ever have any 'Goodnight.' " And Brother Andrew went to bed, too —thoughtfully.

PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS

AS Christmas drew near, the Brothers began their preparations. The great kitchen, now full of weeds and with the ivy climbing over what was once the fireplace, steamed with the cooking of meats and the baking of loaves, for the poor people and the children of the village were always their guests. Brother Adrian would look out his Christmas music and from the chapel, as he taught them, would come the voices of boys and lay brothers practising the holy harmonies of Palestrina. Gruff Brother Ambrose, whose tongue was as sharp as his heart was big, would grow unusually gentle and, if he thought he had perhaps hurt anybody's feelings with his quick and careless speech, would be found doing quiet kindnesses to such—so unnoticeably that it almost seemed as if he were ashamed of them. Good Brother Ignatius—so skilful with pen and brush, as the illuminated manuscripts for which the Abbey was famed well testified—made little cards on which the Manger, the Angels, the Wise Men and the Shepherds, and above all the Mother and Child, were beautifully painted for the folk who were sick to hang above their beds. Brother William, who looked after the live stock began to give them extra feed. "For," he said, "even the oxen and the asses knew the presence in their stalls in Bethlehem of Him for whom there was no room in the Inn, and all God's creatures should share in the season of Peace and Goodwill." So each in his own place and his own way made ready and the good Abbot Stephen moved amongst them with words of encouragement and good cheer, and smiled a blessing upon all they did. Then one evening in the Refectory, as he led their prayers at nightfall he laid aside his book and said: "Much have ye done to mark that the time draws near the birth of Christ—the feeding of the poor, the praise of God, the making of fair pictures and even the comfort of dumb beasts, all have had your care. Yet there is more to do, for our hearts must be prepared by forgiveness of all who have injured us and amends to all whom we have injured, by love and prayer and simplicity and expectation, and it will then be that even to us sinners there will be given a real Christ-Mass and God will send us His blessing." Little did the good man dream what was about to happen that Christmas eve, but he did indeed speak truth when he said, "The first thing to get ready for Christmas is our own hearts." And the Brothers took his word to theirs.

THE COMING OF THE CHILD

AROUND the Abbey the snow lay everywhere. Softness and silence met the Brothers as they walked in the garden or went on their errands of mercy. A great peace held everything. On Christmas Eve, fresh from their prayers, they had gathered in the Refectory, when the bell which hung at the outer gate startled them with a peal that was gentle, almost hesitating as if the suppliant from whom it came was feeble. “Some storm-bound traveller,” said Brother Ignatius, “pressed for an inn and seeking shelter.” “He would come through the village,” answered Brother Ambrose, “and would not pass the Tabard sign to push his weary beast to our door.” “Well,” smiled the good Abbot, “while we wonder, someone awaits admittance: so, Brother Andrew, let him in.” Brother Andrew pulled his cowl over his head, for the snow was still falling, took his lantern and, opening the great door, made his way to the gate. Flinging wide the postern, he looked out into the night. “But there is no one,” he said to himself at first and was all but shutting out the storm again when his eye fell on a bundle lying on the step. "Jesu, have mercy!" he exclaimed, "a babe!" A babe verily it was and, looking well both ways outside to make sure no other was seeking entrance, he gathered the unaccustomed burden in his arms, closed the door and, all amazed, ran back to the Refectory. "Behold the storm-bound traveller!" he cried, as they pressed around him, and then it was the good Abbot saw a paper fastened to the little one's breast: "In the name of Christ the pitiful," it said, "have mercy on my child! No earthly father owns him, no worldly hope awaits him." "But what shall we do?" asked poor Brother Andrew. "Aye," said Ambrose, "good are we all for prayers and fastings but for nursings —well, God have mercy on the infant!" "Even so," said Abbot Stephen, "let us not forget Him for whom there was no room in the inn." So they set themselves in that spirit, though with far more love than knowledge, to the task of rearing the stranger-child and very quickly every heart was in his hands. Brother Andrew, as the discoverer, took the principal charge and was allotted an extra large cell to which Ambrose always referred as "The Nursery," and the child grew, knowing no woman's care and lacking none—such was the tenderness of the Monastery, the only home he ever knew. It made a wonderful Christmas and every year that came found the same prayer said: "We thank thee, O God, for the Child who came at Christmas," and not by any means all, if any, of the Brothers omitted from their thoughts of the child with the capital "C" the little waif on the doorstep, and there was no prayer to which there was ever given a more fervent and unanimous "Amen."

THE PESSIMIST

"AH, Brother Jeremy," said Ambrose on New Year's Day, "weeping again? What's the trouble now?" The most doleful of all the monks lifted his head to show a miserable tear-stained face which, indeed, was the usual condition of his countenance. "Oh, good Ambrose," he sobbed, "There is another year before us and who knows what will happen! Some of us may be sick; affliction may come upon us. I may lose my speech; the good Abbot may die; our Abbey may be dispersed, as indeed Thomas Cromwell threateneth. All sorts of terrible things may happen this New Year." "I should not include thy loss of speech amongst them," said Ambrose, "nor yet the sealing up of the fountains which supply thine eyes. 'Tis true some of us *may* be sick, and the rest will then tend them until they are well. 'Tis true our good Stephen *may* die this year, but if ever an old man were sure of Abraham's bosom, it is Stephen, so wherefore sob and moan thereupon, especially as last week in Chapel, thyself didst long to leave this sinful world forever in a portion of the psalm where

I stopped singing, for I have no such longing. 'Tis true the Abbey is threatened and they may take much from us, but they can never take what we have been, or what by the grace of God we individually are. All these things *may* happen. Now let me tell thee what *will* happen. The sun will rise punctually every morning; little green shoots and sweet clean leaves will come on the barren tree trunks this Spring and change to gold and brown in the Autumn. Birds will sing and rivers run. Friends will love and benefactors be kind. Work will be faithfully done and prayers wondrously answered. Old folk will give their dying blessing to little children who will carry life on. Of these things we are *certain*. I shall attend to the certainties and let the may-bes and may-haps lie with God." "Aye," said poor Brother Jeremy, "but who will tell Him of them; perhaps He may not know which from which," and he fell to weeping again lest God be less wise than himself.

GOOD RESOLUTIONS

BROTHER HILARIUS made new resolutions every week. He was always promising himself that he would be good and lamenting that he was so bad, and yet all but he were perfectly aware that the monastery held no one of sweeter spirit than this laughing childlike soul. Still his resolutions were made very solemnly and the brothers all loved him too well to laugh at him, and therefore one day they listened quite seriously while he said:—"I have resolved as follows henceforth: 1. Each day I will be cheerful and kind so that I may come to my couch at night happy and satisfied. 2. I will not be distressed about what I cannot help, save to help those who are distressed. 3. I will not be angry, proud or revengeful. 4. I will make everyone I meet glad to have met me. 5. I will be gentle with Brother Ambrose when he is distilling vinegar with his tongue and with Brother Jeremy when he weepeth. 6. I will believe in God." Many were the comments of the brothers. One cried that his references to Brother Ambrose and Brother Jeremy meant he would be busy all day long. Brother Ambrose said he never heard so many clauses to a simple statement—namely that Brother Hilarius just intended to go on being Brother Hilarius. Abbot Stephen nodded his white head and asked very gently: "Tell us, Hilarius, while you thus resolve, since there is not a day on which you are not cheerful, kind, helpful, gentle and a true believer in God." "Well, Father Abbot," answered Hilarius, "it does me good to put these things into words for myself, and the Brothers take no harm from overhearing me. Many of us take our belief in God for granted and then cannot find it when we want it, and so assume that we are cheerful that we become sad without knowing we have gone sour. Thus, Father Abbot, I give myself orders from the Lord Christ—and hope others, as they hear me take them, may also remind themselves just what kind of people He wants them to be. We often remember things better when we say them aloud."

And Father Abbot nodded his beautiful white head again and said, "Brother Hilarius, thou art *very* wise."

THE CRITERION OF BEAUTY

ONE of the boys in the Monastery School was listening to Brother Anthony one day, as the good man tried to teach him Latin, and, as his mind wandered from the teacher's words, as is the way with boys' minds, whether in that day or our own, he found himself thinking, "How ugly he is!" And truly Brother Anthony was no Narcissus. One leg was shorter than the other and there was a suspicion of a hump on his back, and his face was badly scarred on one side. Indeed it was only by courtesy that they called him "Brother," for he was of the Lay Order and came only to teach the smaller boys, Brother Ambrose and no other being the Latinist-in-chief. Poor Brother Anthony was very quiet also and gentle to a fault, and it is to be feared that discipline was not too rigid in his classes. One day, apparently out of connection with nothing, Brother Ambrose said to a group of them: "Brave lads and true men should ye be, with such a man as Anthony to look upon," and he told them how once a young man had plunged into a burning house to rescue forgotten children, how he had brought them one by one to the window of their bedroom and lowered them to those waiting below, that he had just been going to leap himself, and stood there a second framed in the burning casement, a fine handsome lad, when there was a great crash and the timbered house fell, burying him in the ruins and flames. They got him out but with broken leg, injured spine, and burned face—"as sweet things as the Five Wounds of Christ," said Ambrose, "but they make no other life possible than teaching such brats as you." Yet 'tis strange how knowing more changes our thoughts and makes us kinder, for next day as Brother Anthony's class gathered, there was not a sound, and, when the boy's mind wandered again he saw blazing timber, crashing walls, and little children rescued, and his eyes turned to poor Anthony's twisted shape and scarred face. "How beautiful he is!" he said to himself.

GROWING OLD

ABBOT STEPHEN was really very old and the actual government of the Monastery would have been beyond him but for the fact that no government was needed. Everything had long ago been well planned and Farm, Gardens, Kitchen, Scriptorium—which was the long name they gave the room they used for their beautiful manuscript work—had each a group of Brothers who loved him too well not to do their duty faithfully. Now and then, of course, two monks would become a little unkind to each other, but the very presence of the good old man was usually enough to settle that. His rebukes were as rare as his mistakes. Sometimes he would talk of resigning, but that was enough for a chorus of protests, and one night even Brother Ambrose grew gentle and Brother Hilarius solemn as they begged him to stay with them. "His face in our chapel," said John to Brother Andrew one day as they walked in the cloisters, "is so beautiful. I wonder how one can grow old and look like Abbot Stephen." "There are two things necessary, I should think," said the older man; "the first is to believe that the years ahead are just as full of joy and interest as the years behind, just as Autumn is quite as delightful as Spring. It hath a different beauty, but it is just as great a beauty. So it is just as interesting to be sixty as to be sixteen, but it is a different sort of interest. The other thing is to take out of each year as it ends the special mercy God has permitted us—thus to say one December, 'This year God hath given me a friend,' and the next, 'This year God hath let me help an unfortunate,' and the next, 'This year God hath opened a new way of service.' Then to string these into a rosary of memory on which are all our blessings is to be old and to make everyone feel a blessing as we pass." Brother John was still very young but he was very wise for his age. "Ah," he said, "how I thank God that I have many years before me in which to grow old like that!"

WHEN SICKNESS CAME

WHEN John was still a boy in the Monastery by the River, on whose threshold he had been abandoned one Christmas Eve, he was once very sick—so ill that it was said he would not get better. The monks went about on tiptoe, scarcely speaking to each other, and, when they did try to exchange comfort, their voices would break and the tears come, and they just bowed their heads and parted. Brother Andrew, whose special charge the lad had from the beginning, nursed him day and night and only ceased nursing to pray—for John meant much to Andrew now. Even Hilarius belied his name for once, and Ambrose was fetching and carrying all the time. Everything in the Monastery seemed to stop—because the boy was ill. No manuscripts were illuminated; no gardening was done; no books were read; no fish were caught; no visitors entertained. Then one day there was better news; very soon a weak and wasted John was sitting in the garden, chiding them for their neglect of it, and surrounded by the whole Monastery, with even the dignified and saintly Abbot smiling gently upon the circle which had no nearly been broken.

"Only Brother Andrew's care, my son," he said, "has kept you with us." "None knows more than I," said the boy quietly, "what Brother Andrew does and is to me,"—and he pressed the monk's hand; no words were needed between them —"But he could not have done it alone, Father Abbot." "I rejoice," said Stephen, "that our novice has so clearly seen that the prayers of the brethren and the goodness of God helped Brother Andrew." "And love," cried Brother Hilarius, "for we laboured and prayed because we love him—all of us—even Ambrose." *"Even* Ambrose," said Andrew speaking for the first time, "never had a nurse a better maid or a greater nuisance than love created out of that same Ambrose, for he was every moment wanting something to do."

"Ah, well," said the Abbot, laying his hand on John's fair head in blessing, "he is back with us again, thank God." "Aye, back again," said Brother Ambrose, "and a pestilent fellow enough he will be now he knows that we care whether he lives or dies." But he smiled as he said it, and that night in the Monastery everybody went to sleep like that—smiling—and God looked down and smiled too.

NOT APPRECIATED

AFTER Brother Ambrose had taken the place of the priest down in the village while that poor man had the plague, he returned to the Monastery with a sharper tongue than ever. What annoyed him most, he said, was that of those who came to hear him preach, some were thinking how well their neighbours deserved these rebukes, others were not listening at all, while others again were seen to be nodding their heads very wisely because they thought they heard the echo of their own opinions. The Brothers said that surely, then, he had found joy in the homes of the villagers, to which the surly monk answered that, of those he went to see half were flattered into doing their bare duty and the other half were indifferent to it and to him. He had returned from his task without thanks and felt religion to be in a sorry state. It was not often that Abbot Stephen rebuked Ambrose, but on this occasion he kept not silence. "My Son," he said very gently, "I sometimes wonder how you know some things, and how you fail to know others. I wonder still more that you should think of thanks. Why should any man be thanked for just fulfilling his vows? And is it not the simple duty of all Christian men—let alone all good monks—to do everything possible for our Blessed Lord's service? Why, then, thanks—and from whom? And what is more, if all people are as lacking in gratitude and grace as you would have it, is that any excuse for *your* being less than your best or for your falling into their error? What other people are or do only affects what you are or do, *after they have proved themselves stronger than you.* If they are *not* stronger than you, you hold on your way. Besides, I know that at least one man turned from sin—even if his two brothers reviled you; that at least one old woman died peacefully under your prayers; and that at least one poor child was made happy by your kindness. What thanks would you have save those ancient words, 'Unto the least of these as unto Me'?" Brother Ambrose was not often silent, but that night he asked for a penance "for," he said, "I had forgotten how to be a Christian in that I coveted thanks."

GIVING AND RECEIVING

IT was Brother Adrian who taught the monks to sing, and he always said you could tell a man's character from his voice—though that was a little severe, for Brother Ambrose was not nearly so rough as he sounded. The boys, of course, came from the village, for the monastery was school as well as church for the neighbourhood, the girls going to the good Sisters just across the river for their instruction. One day, during his novitiate, John asked Brother Andrew a question. He was no more than a youth, but he had lived with the Brothers ever since that snowy Christmas Eve when they had heard a baby's cry on the Abbey step and had found him there—poor waif—left to their charity. They had given the boy more than charity for they loved him very dearly (though very wisely) and he loved every one of them. Therefore it was only natural that he should grow up to become a monk, and the more years he attained the more he marvelled at the way these men served their brethren. Education, relief, sick-visiting, entertainment, every sort of help and comfort they gave the often ungrateful villagers—besides providing all their worship, and then tended farm and gardens, illuminated lovely books, and kept the lamp of prayer lighted for them all day, tending it at regular hours.

So one day, as they had been sitting in the Chapel listening to Brother Adrian at the organ, John asked Brother Andrew his question: "The Blessed Apostle Paul," he said, "gives us some words of our Lord which no one else remembered to hand on to us, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' How can that be?" And Brother Andrew looked at him—the father who had never known a son and the son who had never known a father except each other—and he said: "Dear child, the good Apostle indeed gave us the forgotten words of our sweet Lord, but they were better than St. Luke remembered, for Jesus said not, 'It is more blessed,' but, 'It is necessary to give in order to receive.' " Then said John: "Now I know why we are so happy in this place for you all receive—good measure, pressed down and running over, as the Scripture saith—for you are always giving."

THE COMING OF SPRING

LIKE every other garden that of the Monastery awoke with the Springtime, and the first tree that blazed out the message of new life was the almond. Just as you can see it all the way from London to Richmond or Dorking flashing its blossom among its bare or perhaps just budding neighbors, so John and Andrew, leaning over the parapet, could watch its pink joy all along the river bank, and then turn and see it here and there in their own garden. Andrew used to love to tell the old legend of how the almond was appointed to tell the other trees to awaken from their winter sleep and could think of no better way than reversing the order of things and bearing blossoms before leaves, which so startled the other trees that they woke up at once to ask for an explanation, as in the tree world such things "were not done." He also used to quote that sentence in which young Jeremiah records his realization that he must wait no longer to declare his unwelcome message, must let his sensitive spirit hold him back no longer from unpopularity and even death, and sometimes he would be heard murmuring as John and he walked arm in arm through the cloisters out into the Monastery garden to where the patches of pink shone through the green: "And the Lord said 'Jeremiah what seest thou?' and I said, 'I see a rod of an almond tree.' " One day John said to him: "I often think of the many emblems we have in our Abbey church. There is the great Cross that reminds us always of our Blessed Lord's Passion, and that is in the centre, as it should be; there is the Dove of the peaceful Holy Ghost; the I.H.S. which says, 'Jesus Saviour of Men;' the Alpha and Omega which cry the 'Beginning and the Ending.' I have also heard that, when they dug out the Roman Bath in the city of that name, they found a tiny fish on a brick in the foundations, which some Christian set there, as they built it, to say, 'Jesus Christ Son of God Saviour,' as its initial letters in Greek did secretly in the Roman Empire, but I think the almond should be added to our Christian emblems that it might cry with the Springtime the words of the old Christian hymn, 'Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead and Christ shall give thee light.' "

And Andrew afterwards told Ambrose and Ambrose shook his head and said: "Tis a wise lad, and God send that he be in the same mind fifty years hence and they make him Pope, for we old Christians get sleepy, Brother, oftentimes and our Lord said He must not find us so. Yet sleep they did in Gethsemane and so He found them. Yea, 'tis a wise lad this of ours," and he moved away saying to himself, "Ambrose, 'what seest thou?' God send that it be a rod of an almond tree summoning me to wakefulness for Christ."

SPARROWS IN THE ORGAN

OH, it's all so difficult to understand," said Brother John one day, as he and Brother Adrian were walking together. "The world, all these things we see, ourselves, and the sorrow and pain—who can tell us what they mean?" "I remember many years ago," said Adrian quietly, "when our new organ was installed, the workmen beginning to take down the old one and finding a little hole in a window behind it. Through that hole sparrows seem to have come every year, for no fewer than thirteen nests were found inside the organ. No wonder the old thing made strange noises sometimes. I wonder what the sparrows thought of it—especially the young ones—all those pipes, some big like trees, some as little as a stalk of corn; usually all quite quiet but now and then noises coming from them like wind or thunder or the thrush singing through both. "I wonder if they ever talked about it and asked the purpose of it, or, when it fulfilled its purpose and there was music from the organ whether they thought it worth while. I wonder if they ever asked each other questions and whether one sparrow—much wiser than its fellows—professed to know all about it and gravely announced that of course this place had been built so that they could all have their nests where there were no cats. It must have seemed a hopeless business for those sparrows to discover what that organ was all about, and, if I who know and play it had told them and shown them everything, they would not have understood—if indeed they had not been too frightened by my presence to stay and listen. After all," and he placed his hand on the younger monk's shoulder, "after all, we are only sparrows who have built our little nests in the organ, and our only hope of ever knowing anything about it all is to get to love the Organist and some day He will show us all we need." Then said Brother John, "Not even the sweet Lord Jesus ever told His disciples a better parable: I will not forget about the sparrows in the organ, Brother Adrian. In the meantime let us go into the Chapel that I may hear you play it, and think of what God is trying to do with the world and with us."

BACK TO THE WORLD

AS John grew to manhood he thought more and more of the future, but never dreamed of anything save becoming one of the Brothers and sharing for ever the life of prayer and service they had taught him to love so well. In all his talks with Brother Andrew he had shown how he looked forward to the day when he would himself wear the habit of the good monks who had been father and mother and home to him ever since they had found him at their door. Abbot Stephen, however, who was a wise old man—as well as a saintly—said that he should go right away from them for six months, and this not just to the village but to London town itself, and, if he then still desired to be one of them, he would at least have seen something of the great world outside.

So one day there was a great farewell at the Monastery gate, as John rode out into the life of which he had known so little. Brother Ambrose bade him a gruff adieu; Brother Adrian told him to be sure to hear the great organs in the cathedrals; Brother Andrew looked at the fine handsome lad and wondered whether the glitter and noise would not prove too much for the holy life; Brother Hilarius made one of his merry little jests which made them laugh and thus prevented them from tears; and, behind them all, Stephen stood with a smile on his lips until John knelt for his blessing and rode away.

Never since his illness had there been such a desolate place or such a listless company as the next six months saw in the Monastery by the River, and all their faces were anxious and drawn, for they were wondering whether or not he would come back. Then one day he came, and all was commotion. From the porter at the gate to Father Abbot himself there was rejoicing. The villagers had even run alongside his horse to the Abbey door, and John rode in the midst of them smiling, and yet with eyes looking far away. To Stephen he knelt again for blessing and after all the greetings were over and night had fallen he sought Andrew and together they went to the Abbot. "Father," said the lad, "I have seen many things, but I have never yet seen riches without cruelty, work without weariness of spirit, or service without an eye to a reward save where men do all for God and the love of each other. So I would serve men by living near the altar and go into the world from the house of prayer and give my life to God alone that it may be truly mine and my neighbour's also." And Andrew's eyes were dim, as the old Abbot laid his hand on the young head and said the words of our Lord: "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes."

THE LIGHTS OF LONDON

AFTER he returned to them the Brothers listened much to John as he spoke of the great world in which some of them had played no small part but which all of them had left long ago. He described his journey south and how he had wandered out of the way to see Worcester Cathedral, where the wicked King John is buried, and at last had entered London. Some of the houses he saw are still standing, and in one of them today a man I know carries on his business. He told them with delight of the games in Cheapside and with horror of the fires of Smithfield where he had seen a poor woman burned to death because they said she was a witch, and he wondered why Brother Ambrose smiled and muttered to himself, "Aye, Tom Wolsey of all men!" when he related how my Lord Cardinal Archbishop of York, Lord High Chancellor of the Realm, had passed down the street one day—his red hat borne before him, a train of nobles following after, and the orange-skin, filled with perfume, in his heavily ringed hand. One day he went to Parliament and saw Mr. Speaker in procession and noted the strong and saintly face of Thomas More. "And the streets are lighted now," he said, "for every man is bidden hang a lamp outside his door." "Aye, and they needed light," said Brother Aloysius nodding his head, "for many a time in the old days do I recall the scuffle in the darkness to try to rob some good merchant on his honest homeward way, and I have found my good sword a trusty friend more than once, when I was at Court, defending such." "Lamps outside the door will not prevent robbery," said Brother Ambrose, "nor yet thy good sword, Aloysius, which thou hast well exchanged for thy breviary. The lad has told us of the firelight from Smithfield and the splendour of light from my proud Lord Cardinal and the lamp the law makes a man hang outside his house. Yea, London is ablaze with lights, and yet they rob and burn and rack and behead." "Truly," murmured Brother Ignatius, whose joy was the printing of the Scriptures with wonderful illuminations around the pages, "Not even in our great cities can men forget that the only light that saves is from within—that was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world—even our Blessed Lord Jesus." "Not *even* in our great cities?" grumbled Ambrose. "Thou shouldest have said there least of all."

THE MAYPOLE

JOHN'S adventures out in the world occupied many evenings after his return, and, as the Brothers listened to them, they recalled places, pursuits, and even people they themselves had known before they entered the Abbey. One night, as the boy told of his journey, he described how he had reached a certain village and found the maypole set up on the green and all the lads and lasses dancing around it, threading, with their movements, the brightly coloured streamers in and out, and laughing, as they danced, from sheer joy of being young. Now there was one Brother, Gregory, whose piety always took the form of pointing out where everybody else was wrong and of sitting with thin lips tightly closed whenever there was —as there often was—any merriment in the refectory. It was not difficult to see that he disapproved of John's story, and at last he broke in, "And didst watch this sinfulness?" he asked. "I watched it," said the boy, "but it seemed not sinful to me, Brother." " 'Tis not scriptural," said the unpleasant monk. "Neither is the baptism of infants," snapped Ambrose, "and indeed it *is* scriptural for have ye never read how David did when he danced before the Lord with all his might?" "Well," said Gregory, "I like it not."

"Ah," said Brother Andrew softly, "now hast thou spoken: 'tis thine own soured spirit and not the Scriptures that would frown on harmless pleasures." Then Brother Gregory after the fashion of his kind would have risen and left the refectory, but Abbot Stephen bade him stay. "Brother," he said, "evil lies not in acts but in motives and the lamb in the meadow is not more innocent than any other young thing at play—if the heart be right—and Our Blessed Lord hath been so miscalled the Man of Sorrows that we forget how He always spoke of His joys and of Himself as the Bridegroom with His companions. Go to thy cell indeed, Brother, and pray for a gentler spirit and judgment and, when thou hast them, come again." Then the old Abbot put his arm round John's shoulder and murmured, "Continue, my child." But, as they went upstairs that night Ambrose, still indignant, muttered, "Pestilent, ill-tempered, evil-minded fellow is that Gregory."

RESURRECTION

EASTER was a great occasion in the Monastery by the River. Lilies on the altar and twining round the pillars; processions of singing men and boys going through the nave and aisles of the Abbey; glad and heart-felt greetings in which the Brothers met each other that morning with "Christ is risen," to which was always given the answer, "He is risen indeed, Brother," made a day that always stood out in the story of the year. In the gardens the first shoots of spring gave a greenish haze to the trees, and tiny crocuses and snowdrops made spots of colour on the lawns which were changing from the brown of winter as the sun warmed them into beauty once again. It was on Easter Eve that Ambrose met Henry the Smith from the village who stopped him and said: " 'Tis a good world this in which to be alive, Brother, and at my anvil I find a new vigour in my blows on the glowing iron, as the Spring enters my blood." "A good world indeed, my son," answered Ambrose, "though it hath taken some of us long to discover it," and he returned to the Abbey in a very thoughtful mood. Next morning he was walking with Andrew. "Do we not even within these walls," he asked, "feel the coming of the Springtime; there is something in our hearts," he went on, "that answers that"—and he pointed to the awakening garden. "It is so," answered the other, "for it remindeth us that our Blessed Lord liveth again, and, remembering, we know that the place where He liveth is within us. Our crucifix suggesteth His passion, but there is beyond the crucifix a greater thing than even His death and that is His life in us which cannot die." Just then John came out of the Abbey door and ran laughing to where they were, his golden hair flashing back the sun, and his beautiful features showing the gladness and goodness of his heart, and, as he approached them Ambrose said: "Aye, and in the sour winter that age sometimes permitteth, it is good to know that our Lord hath also another Springtime, for here cometh one in whom He liveth anew and, when we are no more, will be living still." John had not seen them, so far, that day and as he drew near he cried, "Christ is risen, Brothers," and, as they took his hand, they answered, "He is risen indeed, my son," and only Ambrose knew whether he did not change the answering phrase just a little and say, "He is risen in thee, my son."

THE COMING OF BROTHER HYACINTH

IT was announced that one of the Order of St. Francis was arriving in the village and was proposing to preach on the green, and Brother Gregory, as usual, "liked it not." "He is not of our Order," he grumbled, at which Ambrose reminded him of how angry our Blessed Lord was with His disciples because they forbade a man to do good on the ground that "he followeth not with us." "Surely," he said, "Francis and Benedict were both of the Order of Christ, or would the good Gregory suggest that the two men born blind—one of whom our Lord healed with mud and the other with his mere word—should found two different Orders to fight as to whether mud or no mud cureth blindness? At the will of our Blessed Lord blindness is cured more ways than one, and still is so." "Ah," wept Brother Jeremy, "but he may be cunning of tongue and steal away the love of our villagers from us." "In that case," retorted Ambrose, "he is welcome to it: any love that can be stolen is worth nothing. If our service and our goodness have been so poor, so unworthy, so ineffectual that a stranger can steal the love they have earned, then the sooner Thomas Cromwell putteth down our Abbey the better." "I have heard," said Gregory, rubbing his chin, "that in the villages where he hath already spoken many have been turned from their wickedness by his words: we have no Brother here with such eloquence. "Eloquence?" said Abbot Stephen who had been listening, "There is no abiding eloquence save the voice of a holy life and, if we be saints in this Abbey—or aiming thereat—jealousy ill becometh any of us, for jealousy is selfishness and self-esteem and these things are sin; besides which no man ever lost honour for himself by giving thereof to another; therefore welcome Brother Hyacinth. So he came and preached and went again, and even Brother Gregory tried to be kind to him, and as he turned and waved his last "good-bye" and they waved again from the Monastery gate, John said, "We have gained a friend, Father Abbot." To which Stephen answered with a smile, "Yes," my son, "in the only way in which friends are ever gained—by ourselves being friendly."

THE SECRET OF ABBOT STEPHEN

THEY always felt he had a secret—the saintly old man who moved amongst them, so gentle yet so strong, so quick and yet so patient. That he had been a soldier, had risen to high command, and had played no mean part on Bosworth Field where Richard III had lost crown and life, they knew. What they did not know was that there he had given an order which created the recollection that drove him from the world to the cloister. It was a lad they had found in the lines who had accounted for his presence there by a story they had none of them believed, and Stephen ordered him to instant death as a spy. Scarcely was the young body cold when it had been found that all he had said was true and that he had died unjustly. Not all he had seen of battlefields, or death, of the shallow-thinking cruelty of war, could blot out the reproach that looked from that dead boy's face for the man who had taken his life. That was why he always showed John a peculiar tenderness and, while Andrew had the care of him, was always strangely gentle and even indulgent to his little faults and prescribed very tiny penances for his equally little sins.

That also was why when a youth from the village was accused of theft—the theft actually of a sacred vessel from the high altar of the Abbey—and Brother Gregory would have made short work of it, well knowing that the punishment was death, the old Abbot intervened very quickly and said: "Wrongs cannot be righted by doing more wrong and his life is not in our hands; there is even some doubt as to his guilt, but, were that plain, it is not by slaughter that right is proved, nor by murder that justice is done, nor by slaying him that any thief is made into an honest man"—and he would let them go no further. Years passed and the stolen vessel was discovered, hidden away where some day the thief had hoped to recover it. Even then it would not have been found if a dying man had not in his last confession told of the thing he had done so long ago. The news reached the Abbey just as the monks were ending their day and Stephen gathered them round him and told his own story—the hasty order on Bosworth field. "I learned from my shame and sorrow," he said, "that there is at least one thing greater than benefit of clergy and that is the benefit of the doubt."

THE SOLDIER

NOT a few of the Brothers had known camps and campaigns before they had chosen the cloister, and, on one occasion at least, when some ruffians attacked a few defenceless villagers, they found themselves routed by an apparently harmless monk, who, having possessed himself of a sword, by the simple process of flinging his habit over the head of one of the assailants, seemed from that moment to be striking them everywhere at once. Brother Ambrose had grown a little stouter since he fought under his kinsman Surrey at Flodden Field, but his eye had lost none of its quickness and his wrist none of its cunning and he was soon left in possession of the field—a little breathless but wholly triumphant. Then it was that a few hastily summoned men-at-arms arrived, dragging with them the culprits, who had fled literally into their hands, and they found the good monk surrounded by admiring villagers demanding to know how he had acquired this unecclesiastical skill. Not a word did Ambrose say, but one of the soldiers was more communicative. "Why, he hath served," he cried, "and, remembering his swordsmanship, forgot he was a monk and became a man." Then Ambrose spoke: "What, Sirrah!" he shouted, "and what art thou to sneer at the manhood of monks? Art thou bound to obedience? So am I. Art thou disciplined and exercised? So am I. Dost thou follow thy lord? I follow the Lord of all lords. 'A man' forsooth! And what knowest thou of manhood—a drunken brawler off duty and a noisy braggart in thy harness. *Thou* to talk of 'manhood'," and he laughed. "Yet," protested the other, no little crestfallen, "our blessed Lord spake well of soldiers, and it was a centurion who at the Cross proclaimed Him the Son of God." "Thou sayest well," nodded the others, "so it was." "Aye," retorted Ambrose, "but not because he was a soldier did the Lord bless Jairus, but because he was generous and compassionate, and not because he was a centurion did the Roman cry out at Calvary, but because God opened his eyes. True men, true soldiers, and true monks are those with courage, obedience, unselfishness, and purity of heart. Take your prisoners, and beware lest lust and avarice and drunkenness make you more prisoners than they."

So he turned towards the road that led to the Abbey and they, silent and abashed, dragged their captives to the castle gateway across the valley, and the villagers looked after first the one and then the others until at last one of them voiced the thoughts of all. "The best soldier," he said, "hath gone back to his penances and his prayers."

THE EGOIST

THE Monastery held almost every type of man, for the Brothers had come from all sorts of places and occupations, while their daily intercourse and labour had schooled them in thoughtfulness and unselfishness. Therefore there was something like horror in the Abbey when they learned that the Baron had turned a poor family out of their cottage for refusing to assent to a wickedness he wished to do them. The monks took the destitute little party into shelter until some place could be found, and one day the proud nobleman clanked into the courtyard stormily demanding to see Stephen. "I am willing to listen," said the old man, "when thou art calm enough to speak." "I will not have them thus sheltered," blustered the other, I will do what I will, I—I—I—" . . . "Who is this 'I' of whom thou speakest so," asked Stephen quietly, "who feedeth much, is clothed in silks, and maketh his amusement of other and poorer people's tears? Thou sayest 'I', 'I'. I do remember once an Emperor said 'I' overmuch and the Holy Father had him shivering in the snow for days begging for audience that he might learn to say 'Thou' and 'He' more and 'I' less. Meseems this 'I' is a great tyrant and a wicked, and setteth himself above all laws. Tomorrow we expect a visitor who passeth from London to York and will honour us by lodging here the night. He shall judge of this 'I' and we shall then be resolved upon the matter." Now the shadow of Thomas Wolsey lay over the land at that time, and the Monastery by the River, like Leicester, was one of his favourite halting places on his progresses from the capital to his Archbishopric, and the Abbot's hint was sufficient to make the Baron tremble. "I have erred," he whimpered. "So" said Stephen—and John said that his anger was terrible in its gentleness. "It remindeth me," he said, "of the wrath of the Lamb"—"So 'I' is coward as well as knave," said Stephen, "—and feareth not the doing of evil but the vengeance of My Lord Cardinal for evil done. 'Erred' sayest thou? Nay 'sinned'—sinned wickedly and disgraced knighthood, and now art terrified for thy goods, perchance thy skin and thy life," and he looked him between the eyes until the Baron could bear his gaze no longer.

"Then he said, looking at the ground, "I have sinned." "Ah, now," said Stephen, "hast got 'I' in his right place at last. Get thee gone, right the wrongs and make amends, and perchance this time—but His Eminence shall be the judge of the reality of thy penitence and the measure of thy penance. Take thyself and thy people hence."

And they rode back to the castle—very quietly.

MANLINESS

THEY always decorated the Abbey for Palm Sunday and carried palms in procession as well. It was indeed a great sight, for the villagers all came to join the monks and the sight of so many with waving branches in their hands on a sunny day made a scene not soon forgotten—especially when one added the glorious arches and windows with the rays of light streaming through, the wonderful organ music floating round and round, the wide-eyed people looking on and the good monks feasting them all on their lawns after the service because, they said, Jesus never sent people away hungry from His presence.

One of these Palm Sundays Brother William who tended the altar saw that a candlestick was missing and remembered a tiny accident which had sent it to be repaired, and so made his way before the service to where a man in the village had it in his possession for that purpose, to remind him to bring it up with him when he came. "I shall not be with you, Brother," said Theodore the Smith, "I am in no mood for piety today, but the candlestick is even now in its place, for my lads have carried it thither passing you on the way." "In no mood for piety," said William, "no mood for God's house, man's fellowship, Christ's worship—art no longer a man then?" for William could be sarcastic.

"A *MAN?*" said the Smith, his eyes flashing with rage, "but for thy frock I would show thee quickly on thy body with my cudgel my manliness!"

William shook his head, "Not so, for thy manliness lives not in thy strength of limb. Therein art less than several brutes. We have a boar hound at the Abbey can tear a throat better than thou; they baited a bear last year that, given its chance, could crush thee shapeless, Smith. Thy manliness is not thy brutishness but thy victory thereover. Thy name is Theodore—gift of God; the gift of God is sweetness of temper, tenderness of heart, control of passion, service of need, love of our Blessed Lord. No man is man until he has conquered the beast and celebrated his victory." So he reasoned with him and urged and prayed until the big fellow wept. Finally he led him to the Abbey just as the folk were gathering and put a palm branch in his hand and said, in Latin of course, "In the name of Jesus, Saviour of Men," and the Smith, who was trying to live up to the name of Theodore now, could scarcely say the response, which was also in Latin and means, "In the name of Jesus, Saviour of ME."

BIRDS FLYING

THEY always kept doves in the Monastery garden which was, indeed, a sanctuary for birds of every kind. In the nesting season especially, little bright eyes would peep at you out of almost every thicket, and even in the lake there was usually to be noticed through the reeds the red beak of a water fowl proclaiming to the passer-by that she was sitting waiting for the miracle that would turn her eggs to little balls of fluff that squeaked for food. Every bird knew that the sparrow who found an house and the swallow who made a nest for herself near the altars of the Most High were very wise, for they had chosen the place of greatest safety—which, for birds as for boys and girls, is just there. The doves, however, always lived there. Unlike so many of the other feathered people who came only on a visit for a few months of the year, they belonged to the garden, and, except for a few white pigeons who sailed majestically through the air and loved to alight against a background of green to show off their plumage, they were the only flying birds who did.

John had always loved these creatures ever since he had come to the Monastery as a child, and, as he grew, they gave him the task of tending them, and often the monks stood watching him out in the sunshine amid the many-coloured trees and flowers, as the doves circled round his golden head and even settled on his shoulder and fed from his hand.

One day, as Brother Andrew approached this charming picture made by John, the garden, and the birds, a beautiful dove came spiralling down from quite a height to the boy's outstretched arm and, without turning his head from the descending bird, the lad said, "What a beautiful thing our Blessed Lord saw in Jordan, good Brother, when the Spirit came down in the form of a dove. It is easy to believe that God lives with us in things so gentle and beautiful as these." "Even so," said Brother Andrew smiling, "and they are the oldest friends man has; they came and shared his earliest cave dwellings and have never left his houses since."

John was thinking. "It seems to me," he said at last, as he flung some corn and the one on his shoulder took a grain even from his very lips, "It seems to me that that just means that God is man's oldest friend." "Just that," said Brother Andrew.

THE BUILDER

THE Abbey had been built in the 12th century and so was already 400 years old. Everywhere it showed the care and love of those who had fashioned it and lived in it—not a carelessly hewn stone or an untidy corner offended the eye, and there was peace as well as beauty in every part, from the rounded arch of the gateway to the quiet strength of the tower, one side of which still remains to remind those who build quickly of those who preferred to build well.

As the Brothers increased in numbers the need arose for a larger refectory and more cells and so one day the workmen arrived. It fell to Brother Andrew to superintend them and of course John was interested in all they did, for no building was yet made that a boy did not love to watch rise and take shape. They were not familiar faces that he saw with trowel and chisel laying stones, or with plane and square working in wood. "They have come from a long distance," said Andrew in answer to his question, "and are a guild of workmen, pledged to purity of life and noted for skill in their craft, who go from place to place making and repairing the churches of God." John thought of the ugly hovels in the village where little children lived—or, more often, died—and said "But why, then, are not the cottages of our villagers made clean and strong and lovely? Is it not as needful that a little child should grow up amongst these things as that we should pray and live under the shadow of this Abbey?" Andrew shook his head, "Just as needful, my son," he answered, "but the Baron built of himself, and so his cottages are made of rubble and rotten wood, but he who builds for God takes good stone and honest oak and pride in fine craftsmanship and out of them comes strength and beauty. No man buildeth anything noble who is not noble himself." John was silent for a while and then said: "When I was in London town, I went out by Charing Village to Westminster and they told me that the Abbey there was begun by Edward the Confessor." "That was so," answered Andrew, "and Henry III finished it, but the designing and carving and arching was done by neither of them, but by honest and pious monks and workmen who loved God and their fellows and had beautiful thoughts which they made into stone and wood and glass with much care and many prayers, knowing that we never *do* anything that is better than we *are.*" "So," said the boy, "good government means good men to govern and worthy building means worthy men to build, and, before we give God a house fit for Him, we must build our own lives into beauty by prayer and sweet thoughts and loving hearts." "Hast learned the art of building," said Andrew taking his arm as they turned toward the Abbey door, "and wilt one day leave something behind thee which, like our Monastery by the River, will make passers-by exclaim, 'A good man once lived here. I will pray for his soul ere I go on.' "

HOLY WATER

JUST inside the broken arch of what was once the Abbey's west door you will find, built into the wall—or, rather, carved out of it—a kind of bowl which those who know call a "stoup." It used to contain the Holy Water and, as the people entered for worship each dipped his finger in it and crossed himself as a symbol that he came cleansed and consecrated into the House of God. Here, and not in the Bible, is the origin of the baptism of little children, though Ambrose used to say that the baby's innocence hallowed the water far more than the water could cleanse the sinless babe, at which piece of heresy Brother Gregory pursed his thin lips and was about to say, "I like it not," when Brother Martin interposed, "And yet, Brother, water is always a holy thing, for it is the commonest of God's gifts and is the one thing man cannot live without: it falleth from heaven in rain and bubbleth from the earth in springs; it riseth in fountains and tumbleth in waterfalls and, being most necessary, is also most beautiful," and John remarked that nothing in

London town had been to him more wonderful than the river—then the great highway of the city—and that he had never seen anything so lovely as where it flashed in the sun from the hill outside the king's great park at Richmond. So they all began to tell stories of water. One remembered how David had longed for the well of Bethlehem when an old man in the midst of his army, and how three men stole through the enemy's lines to get what they thought he wanted, only to see him pour it out as a libation to God, too sacred to drink, "for" he said "it is the blood of men that went in jeopardy of their lives for love of me." Another who had travelled in the East said that men sold it in the streets crying their wares as "The gift of God, the gift of God," and that once he had seen a man of wealth and power stagger in from the desert with blackened lips and swollen tongue, gasping "Water, water, for the love of God!" Brother Cyril was a young monk noted for his quiet thoughtfulness and he said: "Our Lord thirsted on the Cross and they gave Him vinegar to drink, who had bidden men be as 'wells of living water.' It was the last cruelty." Brother Theodore reminded them of the little rill of Siloam that flowed into the midst of Jerusalem at the Temple and, in her many sieges, safeguarded the garrison against being starved into surrender through thirst. "No wonder," he added, "that the psalmist cried concerning it, 'There is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God.' " Stephen listened to them, smiling his agreement, and then said at last, "Is there not a holier water than these? 'Whoso shall give a cup of cold water in the name of Christ'—to be men who carry that without which other men cannot live and which only God can make, and to bestow it freely, is surely to be the bearers of the holiest water of all." "Ah, Father Abbot," said Cyril, "let us pray that our Monastery may not only be by an earthly river but fed by a heavenly."

Just then the bell began to ring for service and the villagers to make their way in by the west door, crossing themselves with the holy water as they entered, cleansing their simple souls that they might meet God without shame, and Stephen rose, "Come," he said, "let us go and carry them that living water of Christ's love which is the holiest of all."

THE RIVER AND THE SPRINGS

THE river flowed very quietly by the Abbey walls, merged into the Yorkshire Ouse and at last into the sea, and they grew to love its companionship as well as its beauty. Sometimes its waters were low and then, as they fell asleep the last thing the Brothers heard was the splashing of some tiny rapids just below their windows. At other seasons, swollen with the rains, it buried even the great boulders and silently, without even a ripple, through wheat and lilac and willow, took its course to the ocean. Brother Aloysius, who was a great fisherman on Thursdays (and no mean trencherman on Fridays) told John one day of how it passed by town and hamlet, turned mill-wheels to grind corn, was fed by the rain and moved to laughter by the sunshine, "but it cometh," he said, "from Malham Cove, where in a great limestone gorge there are springs beneath the ground." The boy who lay beside him on the bank flung a pebble into the water and watched the ripples die away and then said, "But if the springs dried up?" "Then," said Aloysius, "there could be no river, sirrah. The corn-mills would cease, the great city beyond us would lack drainage, for not all the rains could make a river that flowed for ever, as this one doth." "Then all dependeth on the springs we cannot see," mused the lad. "Aye," rejoined the other, "as all life doth; for, if God gave us not, what should we have? His love is the spring of the river of life. With sin we may blacken the water and with our little pebbles disturb it for a moment, but always His sweet and hidden springs are flowing in the hills." John thought for a while and then said, "Then must men keep the river clean." The Aire still flows where the ruined Abbey lies, but no fish can live in its filth today, and the sun can no longer make laughter in its dark and turgid stream. All the factories and cities along its course pour their sewage and waste into its waters. Yet still at Malham Cove the springs hidden in the limestone gorge are as clean and fresh and persistent as ever. Hundreds of years ago, as John sprawled there watching Aloysius fish for the Monastery table, he knew that if the river is poisoned, the springs are pure; if the world is evil God made it good, and if the water that flows past us is foul it is because of the things that men have thrown into it. "Then," said he, "must men keep the river clean."

SCULPTURE

WHEN John grew old enough to take his first vows, he went much into the chapel for prayer and meditation, and often a ray of sunlight would come through the window and pass along the statues of the Blessed Apostles that stood near the altar, and it seemed to him that it rested last and longest on his own saint—John, the Beloved Disciple, the only one of the Twelve who stayed by the Cross on Calvary. It was a beautiful boyish face and figure and only wisdom prevented the good monks from telling him how like both were his own, and once as he walked with Stephen in the garden—the old man supporting his own steps with his arm around the strong young shoulders—the lad told him of his fancy about the statue and said, "It was a good man, Father Abbot, who carved that face." "Hast ever thought," answered Stephen, "of thine own life as just such a statue? That long-dead sculptor had only a block of stone on which to begin and he hammered here and chiselled there until that face appeared. I fear sometimes thou hast thought we were a little hard with thee in thy boyhood, but we were all trying with God's help to make a good man out of the babe we found at our door. Andrew, especially, but I too—and even Ambrose (for he loveth thee well)—were anxious only that the stone should shape into the face and figure of a good man." "Well do I know that now," said the youth, "and for it well do I love you all, aye even good Brother Gregory who by always saying, 'I like it not,' taught me to look for the things that were good even in the midst of what seemed not so. Well, the work is done now, Father." "Nay, my son," said Stephen, "it is never done even upon the oldest of us. I sometimes think of Wells Cathedral where the statues are outside on the west front, and rain and wind and heat and cold are forever at work on them, and wonder how we should fare if sorrow and cruelty and sin had access to us here, but God will surely care for us and carve us into the image of His Son if we but trust Him." "Andrew's care of me, and thine too, good Father Abbot," said John, "which have made me aught of good I am and given me aught of good I have, cannot be more loving than the skill and watchfulness of our Heavenly Father." Next day as he knelt there at his simple prayer the ray of sunlight came again, but, as it passed, a cloud covered the blazing ball at one point. It was just as it moved from the centre of the altar where it had shone on the face of our

Blessed Lord on the Cross. Then for a moment the Abbey grew dark as if a storm were gathering and the faces of Matthew and Peter remained in shadow.

Soon, however, with the passing of the cloud, the beam came again, just in time to light the features of the Beloved Disciple and John noticed how alike Jesus and His Apostle were—as they might be, for, after the flesh, the mother of our Lord was sister to the mother of His dearest follower, and then the boy prayed once more and said, "Carve me into the likeness of the saint, O God, that I too may resemble Him," and, even as he asked it, as if in answer to his words, the sunbeam touched another cloud outside that shortened it until it fell on his own head, and Brother Andrew, who had come to fetch him at the end of his vigil, said to himself, "He alone cannot see that he is so like the saint whose name he bears. May he ever thus unknowingly grow into the beauty of God," but aloud he said, "My son, the doves in the garden await their daily food," and with a welcoming smile the lad rose to his feet and took the arm of him who had been so long his more than father, as he said, "Come, then, and let us feed them, Brother Andrew."

A BROKEN HEART

THEY always wondered why Brother Christopher walked alone. Although he had been in the Monastery many years, no one seemed to realize who he was or whence he came. Moving amongst them, he yet seemed always solitary—even in refectory and chapel he sat alone, and much time was spent in his cell. Brother Ambrose was inclined to be severe on him, and to say that he must be cured of the distaste for human kind that he appeared to have, although at other times he would say that they were not going to ask the surly monk for company. Brother Andrew used to answer that, whatever Christopher did, it was not for them to answer sullenness with sullenness, but to preserve the mind of Jesus which rendered to no man evil for evil. Brother John hoped that some day they might love him out of his lonely habits and that he might love them back again. Yet all the Brothers resented and no one understood, until one day Abbot Stephen, who had a quick eye for things, took a few of them to the river side and told them of a rich young man who had all that heart could desire, and was happy with his wife and little children and beloved in the village around, where every cottager knew the kindliness and generosity of the little family at the big house. Was there sickness, who so quick to come as they, bringing with them comforts—and what mattered even more—friendliness? It was in one such time that one of the children, wandering into the village on mercy's errand, caught the plague, and soon all lay stricken at the big house, save the master who was abroad in Flanders. Helpless they lay until the mother, scarcely able to see, tried one day to heat some milk—or so they thought it must have been—and the house which was largely timber, was burned to the ground with the two dying children and their mother within. The father returned to find himself alone, and never again could be other than alone. So he came to the Monastery by the River and took the name of Brother Christopher. The Abbot said no more, but from that day they knew that Christopher was not sullen, but only broken-hearted, and they set themselves to love him back to life.

THE RESCUE

THE river ran just under the Monastery walls and Brother Andrew sometimes leant upon the top of it, idly looking at the water swirling by. One day he noticed, for it was the time of flood, that a little dog, feebly struggling and faintly whining, for it was all but exhausted, was being carried down the tide. He recognized it at once as the pet of the paralysed girl in the village, and, knowing what its loss would mean to her, as well as from compassion for the animal, he hastened to the rescue. Now the monastery stood high, and the wall on the river bank was so far above the water that the good monk had to go far round before he came to the gate, then turn to the right, and then along the stream to where the poor victim would have reached, and, although he ran, it took him quite a while to reach the spot. When he did so he found he was too late. Brother Ambrose, who never spoke kindly nor acted unkindly, was already there with the poor exhausted puppy wrapped in his drenched habit and was turning towards the village to restore the treasure. "It was well done," said the newcomer, "but art wet with wading." "Better the waters of the river," was the answer, "than a soaking from a maiden's tears," and Brother Andrew said to Brother John as they walked in the garden that evening, "Why *will* Ambrose never admit that anything he does comes from the kindness of his heart?" And Brother John thought a moment and then said quietly, "Perhaps because he thinks the kindness of the heart our bare duty, and you remember in the Refectory how he said, 'God praises no man for doing his duty or paying his debt,' but only for losing his whole life unto life eternal."

THE COMPASS

IT was Brother Martin who opened the gate when the beggar knocked, and who washed and fed him and gave him garments, when he stepped from the wild weather outside, famished, travel-stained, and wet to the skin. Around the fire that night they heard his story of the lands he had visited, the seas he had crossed and the people he had met. Once he had been a student at the University of Bologna, then had visited Mecca—at that time the greatest market for trade between the East and West—in the employ of a silk-merchant. He had sailed with Columbus, been a soldier-of-fortune in the Low Countries, and servant to a great noble who had escorted Catherine of Aragon when she came from Spain to marry the Prince of Wales. Now he was well over sixty years old and no one would employ him. He had neither home nor kindred, and the gate of the Monastery by the River seemed his last hope, for he was quite exhausted. All the Brothers were interested in his story, and John listened to him with all the eagerness with which the boys of that age drank in tales of far lands and stormy seas, and which one artist has shown in his picture of the "Young Raleigh." Most of all was he fascinated by a small mariner's compass which the old man treasured and which was almost his last remaining possession. He told the boy something of its history, how the Chinese knew the compass about three thousand years before Christ, and it was in common use in the East hundreds of years before Europe discovered it, which was only somewhere in the twelfth century—about the time the Abbey was built. He taught John to "box the compass" or read off the thirty-two "points" in order, and explained how, when left to itself, the needle always swung round and pointed to the North. "Many things," he said, "try to draw it away. All the metals in the ship pull it from its true direction, but we find our way by remembering that the needle seeketh the north." They knew little of magnetism in those days, so this seemed a great mystery to the boy. "And what doth a sailor," he said, "who hath no compass?" "Why," said the other, "unless he can steer by the stars, he drifteth hither and thither, seeking port and finding nought but wastes of seas, until perchance the storm sinketh him or he dieth of hunger and thirst. Even so have I drifted," the poor fellow continued, "for I have had no plan to my life's voyage and have found no harbour." Now Brother Joseph was in charge of the kitchens and John told him the old man's tale and said: "We who are here, good Brother, have our compass, for we voyage amid all the things that would draw us thence, with the needle pointing ever to our fair and blessed Lord, but he is adrift still." And Joseph sought Cyril and both then found Andrew and Martin, and all went together to Father Abbot and suggested that the old man's wanderings might end in the Monastery by the River, where he could still help in many tasks of the Abbey, in kitchen and garden and gatekeeping, and Stephen agreed. So they told him of their good purpose and, with tears in his eyes, he thanked them. "I have never," he said, "loved evil but never enough have I loved the good. This sweet place and your kind love for me, which springeth from your love for God and for sinful men, shall make my service a delight to me." So he stayed with them until he set out on the last of all man's voyages, and often, as he met John in the garden and the lad gave him "Good day, Walter," he would lift his eyes from his task and look around the beauty of the flowers and fruits and the old Abbey with its ivy clad walls and the Brothers walking on the lawn and say, "Good day, indeed," and sometimes he would add, "My poor ship hath at last reached her harbour."

THE SYRINGA BUSH

BROTHER CYRIL loved the garden where roses and sweet-william and lilies of the valley grew in profusion, and towering hollyhocks and blue lupins showed their spikes against high walls built centuries before, and here and there a bank of ferns made a fresh green parapet. Around the main lawn were sycamores and oaks and horse chestnuts, while tall poplars guarded the path to the chapel, and on windy nights could be heard swishing on the Abbey roof. Two black yews and a cedar of Lebanon sprang from the greensward at various places, but the king of the trees was a great copper beech that grew in the centre of the lawn and changed from russet to bronze as the summer waned, standing out against all the greenery in solitary grandeur. It was a real paradise, with that peacefulness which age gives, and yet one beauty has been omitted—a huge syringa bush that hung its white waxen flowers just by the Abbey door. Cyril tended that as if it had been a child, cutting out its dead wood, seeing that it had good earth about its roots, and even gathering up the petals that fell so early and so easily. One day he was so occupied, when Brother Jeremy passed by and said, "Toil hath little lasting, good Cyril, and beauty fadeth soon." "Ah, well," answered Cyril, without looking up, "toil maketh men and beauty is beautiful to remember and these white flowers, I notice, refuse to gather dirt until they die, wherein they rebuke us all, Jeremy." "Aye, mayhap," replied the dismal monk, "but I grieve to see thee waste thy labour so." "Waste my labour," said Cyril, "but wherein lieth any waste? The bush every year gladdeneth our garden and it and I are friends, and, for the love I bear it, it giveth more and bigger blossoms every season, and, if their life be short, it is their nature. The good bush doth as best it can in gratitude for my attention, and what can even man do more?" "But if only——" began the other. "If only what?" enquired Cyril, smiling, "If only it were different, it would not be syringa; if only I were not a garden-lover it would grow smaller and poorer year by year; if only thou wert given to laughter, thou wouldst cease to be my dear Brother Jeremy, whom we love for all his moping. The bush is as God made it and therefore best as it is, so long as we help to make its noblest flowers." "But," complained Jeremy, "they have no length of life." "No," answered Cyril, "and therein hath God given it reason to be humble for that it lacketh and made it eager to make the most of that it hath, wherein also it is a pattern for us all," and he laughed and returned to his task, only calling after the retreating Jeremy, "Cheer thee, Brother, for thou shalt see richer flowers here when they come again."

THE WASHING

THERE were beautiful views of the country to be had not far from the Monastery by the River, and once a little group of the Brothers were watching sunlight and shadow chasing each other on a hillside, beyond the winding of the stream which, through grassy banks journeyed towards the sea. For long they looked in silence and then Gregory, who was of the party, drew attention to where, just below them, a cottage garden showed the garments of the family fluttering, newly-washed, in the breeze. "They spoil the beauty," he complained, "and offend the eye. I like it not." "To be clean," said Ambrose, "is an offence to none, and wouldst like it less were they of other habits." "Yet," persisted Gregory, "they need not thus mar the prospect. Let them use some other place." "What other place have they?" enquired the other, "and why is thine eye so shortened that, amid all the loveliness, *this* is what thou seest? With mountains and river and woods before thee, canst behold only these poor garments! Yet are there many like thee, who, amid much that God made fair, have eyes only for that little which pleaseth not the eye." "There is a legend," said Cyril, "that once in Jerusalem our Blessed Lord came upon a crowd that surrounded a dead dog, all exclaiming upon its ugliness, but Jesus said, 'How white his teeth are,' as if, even there, to bid them seek for that which was good to behold, however slight." "I often pray," said Ambrose, "that my sharp and unruly tongue may not be all in me that men observe." "If they lived with thee," said John quietly, "they would not thus mistake thee, Ambrose." "I trust not," said the monk, "and yet I sometimes fear, for Brother Gregory hath reminded me that the small ugliness doth sometimes draw the eye from the large beauty, in the lives of men no less than in the prospects of the countryside."

OUT OF HARMONY

POOR Brother William could never sing in tune, and, like most of his kind, was ignorant of his affliction. The worst of it was that every *Te Deum* found him making more noise than anyone. Flatter and flatter were the notes he uttered until even the villagers spoke of the strange sounds that came from his direction. Ambrose, who sat next to him, tried to bawl the correct music into his ear, and Adrian from the organ would turn the air into his part, and the boys would do their best to cover up the discord, but all to no purpose. Long before they had reached "the glorious company of the Apostles," Brother William was singing notes such as no musician had ever imagined, let alone written, and shouting, "Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ," with all his might, at least a tone below anybody else. Brother Gregory would, of course, have told him—and broken his heart forever. "He marreth our praises," he said, "and disturbeth our worship. I like it not," but Ambrose said that, naming no names, praises might be marred by a bitter spirit more than by a faulty voice. "God wot," he added, "mine own tongue is none too gentle, but not I will silence William, who, like the bullock and the corncrake, praiseth God as best he may." In an unusually severe winter William died. He was very old: indeed some said that even Father Abbot was three years younger, and he passed gently and painlessly away just as morning broke. They buried his body where, through the woods, they had made a cemetery on a height overlooking the river and the valley, and had set a great Calvary of which the cross could be seen from the village. For his soul they sang masses in the chapel, and prayed every night, for, as Stephen said, William was not dead, but alive forevermore, and "if we pray for the living souls we can see, we should pray also for those whom a cloud hath received from our sight." They talked of him too—very often—for he was one of those quiet folk who are never missed until they are gone, and then leave a greater gap than many who make more stir. "He loved to polish the brasses in the chapel," said Andrew, "and would almost fondle them until they shone in sheer gladness." "He was a very peaceful soul," said another, "and I have seen quarrelling villagers cease and bow their heads in shame when William did no more than pass by and smile on them." But Gregory had, of course to add, "At least our singing is no longer marred," to which Stephen said gently: "I am sorry that

William's faulty music is thy best memory of him Brother Gregory, for he did kindly to us all more than once. There are those who can never utter the worship that is in them, and the praises of whose hearts are too rich for their poor voices, but, with his aged body left behind under our Calvary, I think William will not mar the heavenly choir."

"Nay," said Adrian, "rather will he lead their rapture, for he hath found notes at last for the unuttered music of his soul."

ADDING A CUBIT

BROTHER HILARIUS was short of stature and felt his smallness keenly. When walking with Gregory, who was thin but very tall, he had to look up into his face, and even Ambrose who, if not of unusual height was, as he used to put it, "broad i' the beam," with a great jolly face surmounting his monk's habit, made Hilarius seem almost dwarfish beside him At first, of course, John was smaller but at about eighteen years of age, even he had out-soared the little monk, who, like most short people, longed to be tall, not remembering that all tall people long to be shorter, all lean people to be plumper and all stout people to be thin. Curiously enough it was Ambrose who discovered that the thing really troubled him and that his effort to seem taller than he was explained a rather comical dignity of carriage which Hilarius studiously cultivated. "I would," Ambrose said one day, as they climbed the hill to the Abbey together, and arrived, he panting a little, at the gate, "I would the good Lord had given me less to carry, and yet perchance I gave it to myself for, since I changed my harness for my habit, I am become slothful."

"And I would He had given me just another span," said the little monk, "and with a cheerful heart would I have borne it, but now all men look down on me." "Marry," said Ambrose, "that did I not know, nor is it so. If Hilarius be but the inches of his body, our gaze may be a little lowered to see him, but as Hilarius is the kindliest, and jolliest of monks, I do assure thee it is *up* and not *down* that many of us look when we cast our eyes on thee." It was a long speech for one in his breathless condition, punctuated with more than one effort to gather the wind to finish it, and with relief Ambrose sank down on a seat in the Abbey garden, with Hilarius still at his side, to continue the little sermon his big heart meant to preach. "In Scripture," he went on, "it is told how a little man climbed a tree to see our Lord, which was perchance the first great thing he did, for he was a mean scrub of a fellow, as all tax-gatherers are. I pray your pardon for thus condemning them, but tax-gathering tendeth not to make big souls. As our good Gregory would say, 'I like it not.' However, our Lord passeth by and saith, 'He is a son of Abraham,' who was a prince and a venturer and the friend of God. I warrant that from that moment the little fellow became the biggest man in Jericho, for his quick wit told him what our Lord meant—that not the inches of his body but the bigness of his soul, not the meanness of his occupation but its chance for generosity, and not the bitterness of public esteem but the greatness of the possibility within him were his true size. After all many men fill much space that might be put to better use, Hilarius, and if thou goest not far into the sky, thou art big in all our hearts."

This from Ambrose, whose sharp tongue made fun of many things (though never meaning to hurt), was as balm to the wounded little monk, who, as they rose to go in, said, "Brother Ambrose, thou hast healed me of self-despising and made me long only for bigness of mind and soul." "Then," said the other, "when I pray this night I shall be able to say 'Lord, amid much evil, look well at my one good deed.' " And they went on, both laughing merrily.

"NOBLE IS——"

IN one of his progresses from London to York, my Lord Cardinal lodged for the night, as was his custom, in the Monastery by the River. The great company of noblemen who followed the Lord High Chancellor of England—at that time the power behind the throne of Henry VIII—were somewhat apt to patronise the Brothers, many of whom, had they cared for such things, could have matched, both in deeds and birth, the pride of any belted earl in the company. Wolsey on the other hand, was never more at his ease than in the Abbey. Haughty with others he might be, and often was, but with the monks he was always the most courteous and friendly of men, and there was real love between the men who had chosen the way of the cloister and the great statesman whose name resounded through Europe. Only once had the bond strained and that was when Wolsey, who liked handsome fellows about him, saw John's beauty of face and figure and coveted them for his service. "He shall enter my household," he said, "youth should not be mured in the cloister." But where the despair of the Brothers might not have prevailed, John's own firm will proved equal to the situation. "They have fathered and brothered me, your Grace," he said, "and I will not leave them." Nor could all the glowing descriptions of splendours at Whitehall and masques at Richmond or Nonsuch, and embassies to the Emperor Charles or King Francis move him an inch. "They say," Andrew told him one day, desiring that he should see what he was refusing, "that the next Pope will be an Englishman—for the second time in history—and that Thomas Wolsey will sit in the Chair of St. Peter as the Vicar of Christ." "With all honour to my Lord Cardinal," said the boy, "he may sit where he will, if he will but leave me to do the same." So Wolsey dropped the idea and, unlike lesser folk, never showed anything but kindness to the cause of his disappointment. It was on one of his visits that a little girl from the village was attacked by a mad dog, which John fought and killed, but not before it had bitten him. The fear of the Brothers for the consequences was only equalled by the horror of the pain the boy could not conceal as they burnt away the flesh to cauterise the wound. It was then that a young scion of a noble house remarked that a man was a fool who risked his reason for a kitchen wench and that he had no patience with such priestling ways. Wolsey hearing him, turned on him that terrible smile, in which neither eye nor brow took part. "No?" he said, "yet I own myself a little akin to this youth by reason of a thing that once happened in Ipswich." Everyone remembered that, to save a maid in just such plight in that city, the butcher's boy had rushed out with a cleaver in the very nick of time, and that the gratitude of the child's father had been the beginning of the splendour that boy had since reached, for he was now the Cardinal himself. "There was not the same danger that day," went on the stern voice, "and so not the same honour gained, for the lad in Ipswich was not weaponless or wounded. Tomorrow, sirrah, wilt to thy father and say that, having believed that the succour of distress and the braving of peril was a knight's first obligation, and being myself but a butcher's son, I have no place for such nice nobility as thine. Get you gone to my Lord Duke, your good parent, and let him know thou hast been dismissed in disgrace as noble only in thy name." So he swept from the Refectory in a rage. Only when John, with bandaged hand, knelt to beg clemency for the offender, did he relent, and, leaning his hand on the boy's shoulder, return to the assembled company trying to give some hope to the now ruined and tearful sprig of nobility and say, "'Twould vex me, Father Abbot, that the sweetness of the Monastery by the River be marred by my harsh justice;" then, turning to the offender, he went on: "This noble youth hath interceded for thee. For the present serve me still, that I may see if thy nobility hath aught but an empty shell. Not a sounding name but a noble bearing are thy true title. Henceforth seek it," and my lord Cardinal looked at John, "as he doth who hath declined my service that he may serve God only."

WHITE SUNDAY

IT was a great day in the Abbey when, every year, Brother Adrian led them in the singing of the *Veni Creator,* and the weather was so warm that through the open doors and windows the scents and sounds of the garden came into the church. Once in the midst of the short silence, which was always part of their worship—for as Ambrose once said, we talk much and listen little, even in our intercourse with God—the cooing of doves and the trilling of a lark made their way to the altar along with the perfume of roses and honeysuckle and lilac. "It was," remarked Cyril afterwards, "as if everything was resolved to praise God in the way He had shown it how." It was on this day also that the village children entered openly on the following of our Lord, and they wore white clothing. Difficult as it was to find them at that time of year, Brother Cyril tried to get as many white flowers as possible, and, in the dark old Abbey, with its great arches, deep shadows and coloured windows the effect had to be seen to be realized. John, of course, had made his first Communion as quite a young boy, for he had never doubted his love for our Lord, and so one year he had knelt with the rest on White Sunday, and before the great day came had listened as Andrew told him how it got its name. "White," he said, "is the raiment of purity and speaketh of them that have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. It is also the garb of joy and signifieth those who have found the gladness of life. Yet, even more, is it the colour of the victorious, for the Roman general who ascended the Capitol in triumph always wore a white toga, and thus the Christian who celebrateth his resolve to serve our blessed Saviour doth go to his triumph in white." "That is very beautiful thinking," said the boy, "but robes washed in blood would assuredly be red." "Not," said Andrew, "if the blood were the blood of God," and then he went on, for they were walking in the garden where one looked over the low wall at the river running by, and these two who were more than father and son loved to talk of things—the man to the boy no less than the boy to the man—"The thing men forget," he continued, "is that white is a colour. It is not the absence of colour, but the fulness of colour. Where there is no colour the result is black, but where many colours mingle and all colours are comprehended, then that is white."

"I do remember," said John, "that the Baron sneered as we lads went by, and said our white clothing proved we had no stomach for brave deeds."

"And therein," replied Andrew, "the Baron did show again how little he knoweth, for hath not the Bravest of the Brave declared, 'They shall walk with Me in white for they are worthy'? Of course," he went on, "the Baron only knoweth the bravery that is of the animal—the big ox that knoweth itself the stronger and therefore hath no fear. But there is a bigger bravery than that—the timid thing that knoweth its weakness and yet turneth to fight, because of a strength of righteousness that is not his own. It was a poor monk, you know, who stopped the gladiatorial conflicts of the Roman Empire just by leaping into the arena. It was Ambrose of Milan who barred the Emperor Theodosius from the church because he had consented to the massacre of the Thessalonians, and it was Bernard of Clairvaux, who, by the way, belonged to our own Order, whose monk's habit gave the law to Europe just four hundred years ago." "Then," said John, "White Sunday is a brave day." "Aye," answered Andrew, as he stopped and turned to look at the sun on the river behind them, "Aye, a brave day—for them that are brave enough for the King's service which hath more peril than any earthly battle and more reward than any earthly crown."

THE ABIDING LIFE

COME Brothers," said John one day, "let us look at the sunset over the river." From the Calvary they had made it was a wondrous sight for the great red ball seemed to stain the water as it entered it. "I know now," Cyril murmured, "what the Apostle beheld when he cried, 'I saw a sea of glass, mingled with fire.' It was the sunset over the Ægean Sea."

"Suns are setting everywhere in this England," said Ambrose. "Only today I heard that the King hath shattered the shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury, and stolen the gold and jewels thereof for Mistress Bullen." "She will meet an evil end, I fear," said Jeremy, as he crossed himself, "for a neck bedecked with the spoils of sacrilege is in more peril than it knoweth." "Ah, well," said Andrew quietly, "they may break the shrine and steal the ornaments but the bravery of Thomas Becket is beyond their reach, as all the things good men do are outside the power of evil man to mar."
That night it was John's turn to read to the rest,

and, mindful of the conversation, he took part of the Canterbury Tales:—

A good man was ther of religioun
And was a poore parsoun of a toun,
But rich he was of holy thoght and werk
He was also a lernéd man, a clerk.
He wayted after no pompe and reverence,
He maked him a spyced conscience,
But Criste's lore, and His Apostles twelve
He taught, and first he folwed it himselve.

"Well," said Ambrose, "good master Chaucer hath left us a brave picture of them all. I do remember myself going with a company of pilgrims from the West," and he described the journey past St. Martha's, high on her hill by Guildford and Dorking, and along Box Hill until at last the towers of the Cathedral rewarded them with the sight of their destination. "Methinks the Bible hath also word of pilgrimages," said Brother Theodore, "for it was on such a venture that His mother lost our Blessed Lord, and, returning, found him with the doctors in the Temple." "Truly," added Hilarius, "and the psalmist also showeth the pilgrims on their journey laughing and singing and praising God, meeting new companies at every halting place, making even gloomy Baca a gladsome spot, and climbing from upland to upland until at last they come to the Temple, with the sparrows twittering, and the swallows building in safety and sanctity of the altars." "And that shrine likewise is gone," said Andrew, "not one stone remaining upon another, yet the hymns they sang and the comradeship they felt and the joyousness they had in their faith abide forever." There was a long silence in the Refectory. It was as if a curtain had been lifted and across the years they suddenly saw the place they loved so much lying in the desolation that the traveller sees today. It is an exquisite ruin—one of the "show places" of England—but the garden has been absorbed again by the wilderness, grass grows and birds build in the roofless chapel, the empty belfry, and the few stones that mark the site of the very place in which they were sitting. At first the thought chilled and frightened them—hence the silence. Then, like a cloud over the sun, it passed, and Ambrose said, "After all bodies die and souls live, shrines are broken and saints abide, temples are destroyed and God remaineth." "Yea, truly," said Theodore, " 'the world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.' " "And he alone abideth," said Ambrose again, rising, "the wicked men have made much noise in the world while they lived, but they are dead enough now. No puller-down of shrines or slayer of innocents or evil-doer of any sort hath any place in God's future, how much soever men call him 'The Great' and build a mighty tomb to hold his dust. Only a good man liveth, and him they cannot destroy," and he went slowly out, motioning to Hilarius to accompany him. "Ah, well," said Theodore to the others as they all got to their feet to follow them into the chapel, "did not our Blessed Lord say, 'Fear not them which can kill the body'?" And curiously enough, at Compline that night, being Wednesday, their worship included the words: "Fret not thyself because of the ungodly, rest in the Lord and wait patiently upon Him."

SERVANT OF ALL

WHEN Abbot Stephen died, it seemed in the Monastery by the River that the end of everything had come. No one had quite realized just what the old man had meant, as he went out and in, ruling always by love, smoothing away their little differences, and—while too feeble to do the things they did—giving them the heart to do them joyfully. They buried him, under the altar in the Abbey, and then elected Brother Andrew to fill his place. Everybody was sure he would make a good Abbot, for, as Ambrose said, he was like the disciple whose name he bore—slow to speak unless he had something to say, and always there when his Master needed him, quick to find others for his service, and never joining in disputes about which should be the greatest—or indeed about anything. John, of course, was especially happy for Andrew had always cared for him from the time when he had been found—an abandoned baby—on the step one Christmas night. Indeed the first thing the new Abbot did was to admit him to full vows, and then to call him to his own chamber. "Thou hast promised great things this day," he said, "and we who have loved each other long and well are both now pledged to new undertakings, for which the Lord make us sufficient. Yet many there are who promise and fail to perform." John looked at him, "Father," he cried, "thou dost not doubt my will?" "Not thy will," said Andrew smiling, as he laid his hand tenderly on the young monk's shoulder, "only thy strength." So they prayed together that God would make them big enough and brave enough for the things they had undertaken that day, and then they walked in the garden together hand in hand, talking still—as they had done so often. Ambrose, Hilarius, and the rest of the brothers watched them from a distance, and one said, "There are dark days coming for the Monastery by the River; I mistrust this Thomas Cromwell who is everywhere closing the Abbeys and driving the brothers out to please an evil king who, besides wanting to change his wife, would give the lands of God and the poor to his nobles as bribes."

"Aye," said Ambrose, "dark days are coming but we have that wherewith to meet them—young men and older men who have vowed themselves to love God and each other, and at our head one who verily believes that he who would be greatest should be the servant of all." "And who also believes," said Brother Macarius quietly, "that he serves best of all who never calls attention to his service." And so the spirit of Abbot Stephen lived on—as the spirits of all good men do—and others entered into his labours.

OLD FRIENDS

ON the last occasion that Thomas Wolsey came to the Monastery by the River, he was a broken man on the way to die at Leicester. The brothers had not forgotten the first visit when the Cardinal Archbishop of York and Lord High Chancellor of England—with the Hat borne before him and England's mightiest following after—had swept into their hall and condemned a poor man to death for feeding his starving children on the king's venison. Nor had they ceased to remember the thrill of horror when a voice had broken into the pageantry, "Thou owest me a life, Tom Wolsey; pay thy debt now," and there in the centre stood Brother Ambrose, his hand on the condemned man's shoulder, his eyes looking straight into those of the other man in scarlet seated on the chair of state. It was a moment of ghastly silence,—everyone too astonished and dismayed to do anything. Then they saw a look of amazed recognition come into the Cardinal's face, the hard features relax into a smile, and he came down the hall with both hands outstretched crying, "By God, Dick Howard, that will I: set the fellow free."

The story of what lay behind this happening was not told for many a day, but that was how the Brothers first knew Ambrose's name. Today it had been a very sick man who dismounted from his mule at the great door and was helped to the couch in front of the fire by Ambrose with all the tenderness such men try to hide. "Dick," said the dying man, "I shall never reach London. Whatever His Highness may have in mind for me matters not. Traitor's Gate will never close on me till I am beyond the axe. Wilt travel with me the last bit of road, as thou didst the first?" So Ambrose went to Leicester and, when he returned, one of the Brothers said to him that it had been an honour to be the friend of the great Cardinal, and Ambrose answered, "Brother, it is an honour to be the friend of any man—great or fallen, fawned upon or deserted, provided thy friendship be worth the having. If it is, earthly fortune will not alter it."

And ever after they had seen him sitting before the fire and noticed the tears in his eyes as he set out for Leicester, the Brothers found no sting in any words of Ambrose. They had seen into the heart from which they came.

GATHERING CLOUDS

IT was a traveller who brought the first news to the Monastery by the River of the things that had happened in London, the fall of Wolsey, the dismissal of Queen Katherine and the change known to history as the Reformation. "Not zeal for the church," he said, "but the resolve to wed Mistress Anne Bullen hath made His Highness so act"; and the Brothers knew he spoke but the truth. Some of them, who had been men of the court before they became men of the cloister, felt sure of more even than he said, for they were well aware that Henry had cast covetous eyes on the Abbeys and their lands as things wherewith to feed his pleasures and bribe his creatures. Therefore there was a quietness about the Monastery, like that strange dreadful stillness that precedes the hurricane, and it lasted for about two years, while, one after another, the smaller places were closed, their lands and revenues given to favourites or seized by the King himself, and the threatening tide rose nearer and nearer to the walls of the Abbey. The gathering storm brought a change to the ways of some of the Brothers. Gregory's peevish, "I like it not," was heard no more, and his tight lip was no longer of criticism but of courage. Jeremy moped and wept no longer but seemed anxious to do everything possible to keep the others in good heart. Ambrose, whose hair was beginning to show signs of growing white, lost something of his jollity and spent much time at the Calvary where Stephen and William and those he had known best were buried, but the light of a clear resolve was in his eyes. Abbot Andrew and John—now a full Brother of the Order—still walked together in the garden and knew that, whatever happened, they would not separate. More often and more fervently did all the monks offer their prayers in the chapel, and not one of them thought of doing any task less thoroughly for, as Father Abbot said, "let whatever comes find us at our duty," and so everything went on as usual. The garden was tended as faithfully, the manuscripts illuminated as delicately, and no villager was ever neglected because of the shadow that hung over the Abbey. Yet they spoke of it to each other when the evening fell, and they were all of one mind—and, strangely enough, it was Gregory who put it into words. "In bright days," he said, "it is very easy to believe in God and it is then we make our faith firm, even as the ancient writer saith, 'Remember thy Creator . . . before the evil days come,' for when they do come, thou wilt not forget Him: and if we are now to be tried as by fire, it is in the fiery furnace and not in the green pastures that we show our faith in our Blessed Lord and find beside us One whose face is as the face of the Son of Man." Cyril nodded agreement and added, "At least we do well to omit nothing of our daily duties and to 'have our lamps lit and our loins girded.' " "Truly," interposed Ambrose, "for a slackened duty is a sign of weakness at all times, and never more so than when sorrow or fear excuseth it." So they waited for the blow to fall, living each day as it came as faithfully as they could, and John said to Andrew one night as they left the others for a walk alone: "Is it not strange that we scarce knew some of our good Brothers until now? Who would have thought that Gregory of all men would have spoken as he hath this night?" Andrew was standing with him just then at Stephen's grave and, after a moment's silence said: "He whose garment of earthly dust lieth here used to teach us that in tribulation some see only the blackness but others pierce to the heart of the darkness and see a Cross they are made strong and proud to share. In these sad days we are discovering that Stephen did not live in vain or die in spirit. Yet not all is said even then. It is their dark hours which show men as they truly are, and we see below the surface of their lives at last. Gregory is Christ's man and he proves it now." "Aye, Father," said John, "and may we all have strength to prove it." "Amen," said Abbot Andrew, as they turned to go in, and then he said it again very softly, as if to himself, "Amen."

THE END

AT last the day came on which the Brothers were driven forth and Thomas Cromwell, to please a wicked king, gave their lands and Abbey to a nobleman whose family still possess them. No longer could the poor man knock at a gate from which he was never turned away; no longer was the vesper bell heard sending its blessing over the countryside; no longer did learning, art, and piety live in that lovely garden with the doves, or prayer and praise rise continually from the Abbey as sweet incense to the throne of God. Yet they had promised each other that, at the end of every year, such of them as were still in England should meet and renew their old comradeship and talk of all they had done and been together. Soon the number had grown very small, for the older ones were dead and others were in distant countries. Brother Hilarius, for instance, was in India and it was even said that Ambrose had made his way to a strange land where men had faces in the middle of their bodies, and where there was a serpent with feathers, while mournful Brother

Jeremy had crossed the Atlantic with the first explorers and was lost somewhere in the wilds of North America. At last only an old man stood looking down on what had once been the Monastery by the River, leaning on the arm of a younger traveller. Both were dressed in ordinary clothes, for priests had scant mercy in the England of those troubled times, and both had tears in their eyes as at last they turned to resume their journey. "It is so, my son," said Abbot Andrew, "that the water flows under the bridge and will not come back, but the mill wheel has been turned and the corn has been ground as it passed." "Even so, Father," said John, "and, if we have left a memory in the air of this place, they will find it and feel it when many years have gone." And so, as the train used to turn north to Skipton, Hellifield, Carlisle and Scotland, I used to find it and feel it—and I have passed it on to you, that you may leave such a memory behind you, knowing that it is written, "The world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

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